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ABSTRACT

This manual is designed to aid school guidance counselors in creating and implementing a public relations (PR) program to educate those both inside and outside the school system about the purposes, operations, and unique characteristics of guidance and counseling. The manual contains six sections, plus a bibliography of public relations information. The first section defines public relations and explains why PR is important for school counselors, while the second section outlines steps to take in developing a public relations program. Sections 3 and 4 suggest methods for transmitting the public relations message through school media (bulletin boards, newsletters, handbooks) and mass media (newspapers, radio, and television), while section 5 gives examples of ideas that work in reaching students, parents, administrators, the community, and colleagues. The final section is a note on government relations--how to lobby legislative representatives. Throughout, the guide's emphasis is on precise practical methods for developing the counseling public relations program. (KC)

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A Manual for School Counselors

THE COUNSELOR AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

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State Board for Vocational Education

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Guidance and counseling has become a prominent and complex part of the educational system. One challenge for us is that many of those inside and outside the educational system continue to have a fuzzy understanding of the purposes, operations and unique characteristics of guidance and counseling.

The authors of this manual are providing a tool for us to implement an effective community relations program. The benefits to be gained from careful planning and execution of a program are immeasurable. Establishing good communications with our colleagues will pay off, also.

A good community relations program in an educational setting is the responsibility of all in the system. Guidance counselors have a special role. We represent the total system as do administrators. The students are our obvious priority and that is what the community sees as our product. The counseling department's community relations program should be a priority of our educational objectives.

It is with the effectiveness of guidance and counseling in your school and our state in mind, that the authors have developed this manual.

Dr. Jerry Tuchscherer
State Supervisor
Vocational Guidance

THE COUNSELOR AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

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THE COUNSELOR AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

WHAT IS PUBLIC RELATIONS?

By nature of their jobs, most counselors are not public-relations minded and have not made an effort to be certain that people understand their roles. If we haven't done the job, certainly no one else will do it for us.

In order for guidance programs to be maintained and expanded, they must be appreciated by the community as well as by students.

What is the meaning of public relations? It is information given to the public. It is persuasion directed at a public to modify attitudes and actions. It is an effort to integrate attitudes and actions of an institution with its publics and of publics with that institution.

Another definition is that of the management function which evaluates public attitudes; identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest and then executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance.

In the September 30, 1974 issue of the ASCA Newsletter, Louise Forsyth gives the following definitions of PR:

> "Too many of us equate public relations only with publicity--the story in newspapers or on television. It is much more; public relations--or "people relations" if you prefer--includes every contact you make in your daily work, every opportunity you seek to inform others about the services you make available. Public relations is YOU, and you are the heart of any PR program. What action have you personally taken recently to build understanding of your role among the people important to you?"

The best public relations is a job well done. However, to gain needed public support for the counseling and guidance program, you the counselor must communicate this fact. The overall goal of the counseling and guidance program is to be able TO HELP MORE PEOPLE MORE EFFECTIVELY.

Why PR? You must develop, as an integral part of your guidance program, public relations efforts to stimulate a better understanding of your guidance program

- --role
- --objectives
- --accomplishments
- --needs

TO BE EFFECTIVE, PR MUST BE POSITIVE AND INTEGRATED INTO THE TOTAL GUIDANCE PROGRAM--PR IS NOT A ONE-SHOT AFFAIR--IT MUST BE PLANNED, COORDINATED AND OPERATED ON A CONTINUOUS BASIS.

A WELL PLANNED PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM SHOULD BE:

1. Sincere in purpose and execution.
2. In keeping with the total guidance program's purposes and characteristics.
3. Positive in approach and appeal.
4. Comprehensive in scope.
5. Continuous in application.
6. Clear with simple messages.
7. Beneficial to both the sender and the receiver.

PUBLIC RELATIONS DEVELOPMENT

STEPS IN DEVELOPING A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM

1. Determine Public Opinion:

   How do groups and individuals with whom you come in contact feel about the counseling and guidance department? You may use verbal or written techniques to assess these feelings.

2. Identify Your Problem Areas:

   As you assess public opinion, certain problems will begin to emerge. Perhaps you need improved communications programs for teachers and administrators or there may be a basic problem in the plan and administration of the guidance program itself.

3. Identify Your Publics:

   The many groups with whom the counselor works and who are important to the successful operation of the program are called the publics. These can be divided into specific target audiences....

Internal	External	Boosters
Students	Parents	Band Parents
Teachers	Service Clubs	Athletics
Administrators	Civic Groups	
School Board	Industry	
Other Staff Members	School	
	Neighbors	
	Churches	
	Alumni	
	PTA/PTO	
	Government Administrators	
	Labor Unions	
	Legislators	

Each must be fully informed about your program and your role.

4. Establish Public Relations Goals:

   It is these goals which will provide the assessment by which your progress will be measured. Goals will depend upon circumstances--which publics support you, which publics have a negative attitude, and which are neutral because they don't know.

5. Prepare A Written Public Relations Program:

   Outline your short and long term goals and the means by which you plan to achieve them. Included should be the publics to be reached and the means through which you plan to reach them.

6. Implement Your Program:

   The plan should be put into action.

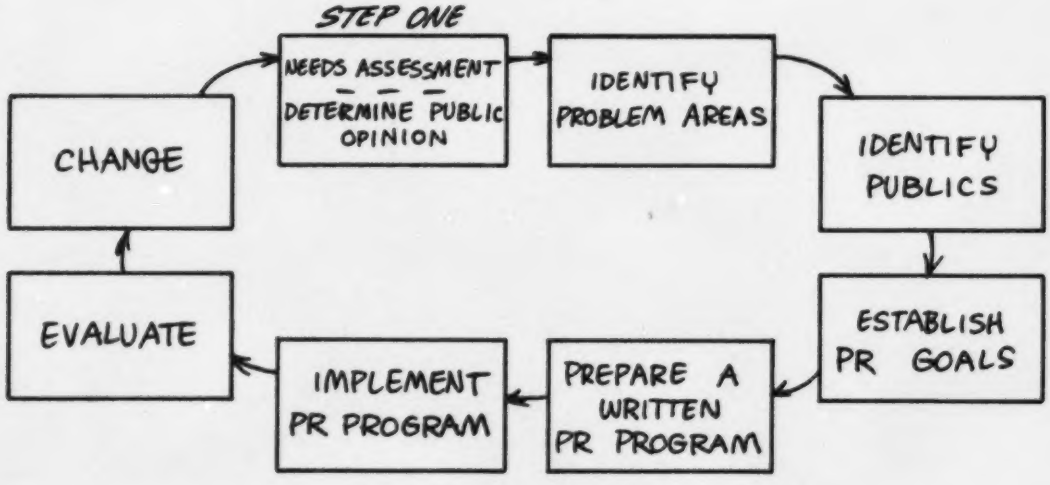
7. Evaluate Your Program:

   Use a short interview or opinion poll to secure reactions from the publics involved. Plan a full scale review of your Public Relations activities and evaluate.

8. Change Your Public Relations Program:

   Following the evaluation, take a hard look at your program. Have some of your goals been met? Should they be revised or dropped? Should new goals and programs be developed?

9. Keep Your Program Continually In Operation



SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Administrators:

   Get administrative support and approval for your Public Relations program. Keep the administration informed on activities.

2. Guidance Committee:

   Organize and maintain a guidance committee. The committee should include representatives of administration, teachers, students, guidance personnel, and community groups. One of the guidance committee's functions will be to assist in Public Relations efforts by making suggestions, generating new ideas and evaluating old ones.

3. Communication--Planned and Unplanned:

   As you establish goals and prepare a written plan, remember the value of face-to-face communications. When you can talk directly with students, teachers, parents, people in the community, and members of the association, they can talk with you. Communications are more meaningful when you have face-to-face contact.

   Ask these groups to let you tell about the school guidance program at one of their meetings. A brief speech with a picture chart or a slide presentation are ways to stimulate discussion and questions. A handout to take home enhances your efforts.
   - --new teacher orientation meetings
   - --general staff meetings
   - --custodial, lunchroom, and bus drivers meetings
   - --PTA meetings
   - --community, civic, and services meetings
   - --state meetings of school administrators

4. Writing The Plan:

   After you have identified your problem areas, identified your publics, and established your Public Relations goals, the next step is to get it in writing. The following chart may be of help. Use it to brainstorm activities and procedures. Complete the cost and how long it will take. Prioritize after you have many objectives from which to choose. DO GET STARTED! Public relations is a philosophy, a way of life you will learn to build on activities you have implemented.

PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN FOR _____
school, system, association

Public	Objective & Activity	Procedure	Cost	When	Evaluation

YOUR PUBLIC RELATIONS MESSAGE THROUGH SCHOOL MEDIA

BULLETIN BOARDS

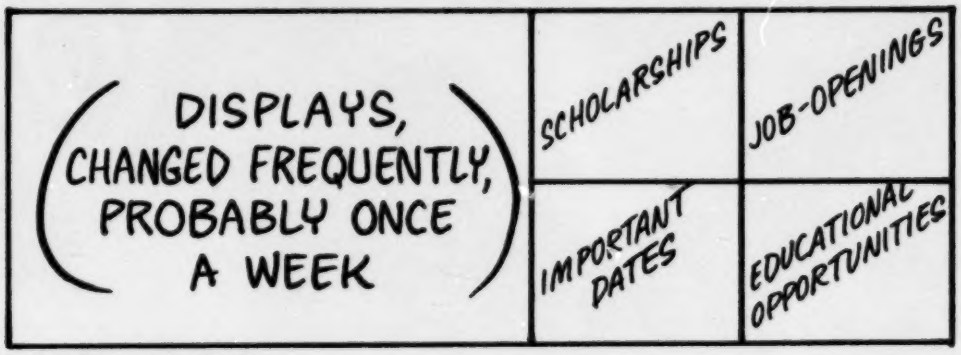
Do you have a bulletin board? Is it fresh, attractive, informative, and attention-getting? Do you seek to use exhibit space in other areas of the school?

William L. Hitchcock in The Information Service lists eight values which may be expected from the effective utilization of the guidance bulletin board. It should assist in:

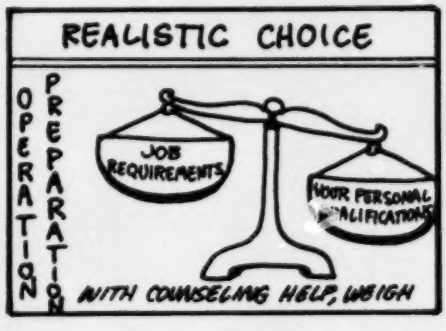
1. A better understanding of the guidance activities by students and faculty.
2. Motivating students to seek additional information and counseling from the counselor and teachers.
3. Informing students authentically of factual data concerning various aspects of occupational information and educational opportunities.
4. Stimulating students to begin thinking seriously about their educational and vocational future.

5. Publicizing student accomplishments.
6. Keeping students abreast of important dates such as scholarship examinations, entrance tests, etc.
7. Promoting certain phases of the guidance program.
8. Stimulating students to utilize their time in school wisely.

The separate bulletin board for guidance purposes would possibly serve the greatest need if it were partitioned with the largest section being set aside for displays which would be changed frequently. A smaller section of the board could be used to post information on scholarships, job openings, training opportunities, important dates, educational opportunities, etc. The bulletin board may be sectioned as follows:



SOME IDEAS:



GUIDANCE NEWSLETTER

Many counselors in North Dakota schools have some type of newsletter. If you do not, it may be the first item to consider on your Public Relations program.

The guidance department should not attempt to publish a full-blown printed newspaper, but should stick to simple newsletter format. Even though you keep it simple, it should be well done. The old purple ditto with 300 blurred, unreadable copies run from one master is worse than nothing.

A well written and designed mimeograph newsletter is an excellent vehicle to tell your guidance message. Dress up the newsletter with an attractive banner at the top. Design the banners with an interesting name, lettering, and a sketch. For a nominal fee you can take several reams of paper to your local newspaper, printshop, or vocational school shop, and they will print the banner for you. When you are ready to print an issue, use the preprinted banner paper for page one.

GUIDANCE HANDBOOK

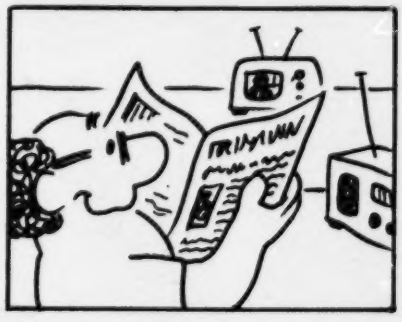
Develop a handbook for ALL your publics demonstrating what services are available through the school counselor.

YOUR PUBLIC RELATIONS MESSAGE THROUGH MASS MEDIA

THE NEWSPAPER

Counselors must be on constant alert for news and feature articles. Many communities are served by weekly or small daily papers.

Many schools or school systems have channels for publicity releases. Find out how the information must be handled and follow through with your releases.



Tips on Media Release:

1. Keep them simple, keep them brief, use no intellectualized big words, keep them honest, don't try to tell the whole guidance story in one article. Divide it into bits and pieces and run it as a series.

2. Remember that the lead, or first paragraph of a news story, is very important and that many editors make a decision as to whether or not to print just from glancing at these first few words. If you are unfamiliar with the lead style, ask your English Department for help.

3. News releases should normally
   --be two pages or less in length
   --be on 8½ by 14 inch white paper or letterhead of your institution
   --be typewritten, double-spaced and on one side of the paper
   --have wide margins to allow editing (1½" or 15 typewritten spaces)
   --be originals or clear copies

4. If possible, hand deliver your news release to the editor.

5. Expect the editor to edit your copy and gratefully accept the editors help.

6. Be careful in releasing material that might be misunderstood or misused to the newspaper. One example might be test scores, you should check all news stories with your principal and superintendent before releasing them to the media.

7. Advertise your services in a display advertisement in the local paper. Make it attractive enough to compete with the commercial ads. Don't forget to include your telephone number and office hours. A merchant might pick up the cost.

RADIO AND TELEVISION

It will be worth the effort if every newspaper release is also prepared for radio and television coverage.

News releases for radio and television differ from news releases for newspapers. They are shorter and you can send a two-page news story to the newspaper, but if you want it reported on the radio, daily news, or TV evening news, condense your release to the two most important sentences; then summarize the whole story. The broadcasting editors should not have to spend their time wading through your story to find the sentences they can use. Write your sentence with flair and use present and present perfect tenses. You are competing with more interesting news.

Contact the person in charge of local production at your local stations. Set up a meeting to discuss plans for a program during the school year. These people are highly skilled in their field, and they will tell you the format they use, and the type program they can do best for you.

IDEAS THAT WORK

The following ideas were edited from the ASCA booklet, "Public Relations Activities for Counselors":

STUDENTS

1. Get information to students on how to contact counselors. Visit classrooms at beginning of school--visibility and briefly explain role.

2. Efforts to orient students to guidance services are essential and can be one of your most effective public relations tools. Develop orientation programs for your school's counseling programs at the feeder schools each spring.

3. Work with all new students to explain the services of the guidance department.

4. At the elementary level, develop a coloring book with pictures and puzzles to explain guidance services to children. Remind children what your name is.

5. Student recognition--congratulatory message, item placed on bulletin board, certificate, letter home--not only academic recognition but for things done for the school or community.

6. Place signs in classrooms emphasizing one typical pupil need and the appropriate guidance service. Rotate the signs periodically for maximum exposure.

7. Organize group guidance and group counseling sessions with students. Have a busy schedule planned well in advance. This could prevent the assigning of routine clerical functions to guidance counselors.

8. Tell why each test is being given and follow with individual interpretation of results.

9. Seniors--Have college admissions informational meetings in the fall with a post-secondary financial aid officer available. Prepare "Senior Words"--fact sheet of dates, events, etc., important to seniors.

10. Extend yourself outside of school building; visit students who are hospitalized; be available after school hours.

PARENTS

Parental involvement is necessary for a truely effective program. Parents are an important channel to both the students and the community.

1. Publish bulletin for parents including information about counseling programs and other services offered, testing dates, list of resource books available from counseling office, etc. Mail to parents.

2. Write one positive letter a day to a parent. Make a positive call a day to a parent.

3. Establish parent discussion groups for parents with similar interests.

4. Conduct parent workshops on topics as drugs, test interpretation, etc.

5. Develop with administrators and others a packet to be given to new families in the community. Call the parent of new students within two days after they enroll and ask if you can help in any way.

6. Offer to be a speaker annually at a PTA meeting to inform re:
   --developmental needs of children
   --counselor role
   --social and emotional needs basic to cognitive learning

7. Hold evening sessions for working parents to consult with counselor. Be accessible to parents.

8. Make parental contact for teacher conferences with parent. Act as a liaison.

9. Participate in community groups where parents play a big role.

10. Prepare a flier on guidance services to be distributed at each parent contact.

TEACHERS

Teachers must feel the counselor is there to help them. Respect is a key word here. Remember it is through the teachers that you reach most of the students, whether through referrals, cooperative efforts, or in-service training.

1. Give special encouragement and information to new teachers.

2. Present the role of the guidance counselor at new teacher orientation sessions. Hints: explain how to, when to, and why to submit a student referral. Involve them in a discussion and clarify in general terms what help they can expect as a result of a student referral. Invite new teachers to the counseling center for an informal get-acquainted session and show them the resources available for student use. Show them what is available in a typical student folder.

3. Conduct in-service training programs and workshops for teachers, e.g., on mental health in the classroom, teacher-student relationships, understanding test scores, communication skills, etc.

4. Offer to act as a resource person for teachers. Pass on new career bulletins and booklets to teachers and help them relate career opportunities to their subject areas. Order guidance films for classroom use. Make a list of materials available through the library (professional books, etc.).

5. A monthly guidance newsletter to teachers to help solve communication problems. Dates of upcoming events and thank yous included with guidance department news.

6. Short thank you note to teachers for their cooperation with something in particular which was not of the daily routine, like beginning of the year schedule changes or grade-level testing.

7. Prepare a questionnaire for teachers concerning guidance services; have teachers fill it out and then discuss it.

8. Plan a meeting for teachers to be conducted by the guidance department to:
   --inform of services
   --inquire of their needs
   --communicate to break down resistance or apathy and to make it easier to use the services

9. Get to know teachers personally. See teachers at social events, sports events, volunteer programs, and fund raising events. Interact personally and socially on sensitive level with teachers.

10. Be active in local education association. Be an active participant, when possible, in faculty functions. Seek leadership roles in your local education association so that you can speak for counselors.

ADMINISTRATORS, SCHOOL BOARDS, "OTHER" STAFF

1. With the cooperation of your administrators, formalize a role statement and job description.

2. Invite school board members to visit the guidance department on an individual basis.

3. Keep an accurate record of just what you do each day for a period of a week at various times during the year and the time spent on each daily activity. Report to the administration and/or school board in terms of student needs; parents needs; teacher needs; efficiency and effective use of counselor's skills, education and experience.

4. Send copies of appropriate guidance correspondence to administrator.

5. Develop manual of objectives and activities for the academic year and send to administrators.

6. Do statistical reports on test data and report to principals.

7. Counselors meet once a week with the principals to discuss joys, concerns, needs, etc. Discuss ways in which the counselor is of value to the school Such a dialogue can be valuable.

8. Develop a guidance calendar for the month and publicize it.

9. Be visible, be helpful; involve others in your activities; report regarding services.

10. Communicate research information supporting need of guidance counselors.

IN THE COMMUNITY

1. Issue certificates of appreciation whenever someone from the community assists in a guidance program.

2. One simple and low cost method is to develop hand drawn and lettered fliers describing counseling services, reproduce them by mimeograph or offset press, and locate businesses (such as groceries and pharmacies) which will agree to insert them in bags being filled.

3. Participate in radio and TV programs to spread the word within range.

4. Write newspaper articles.

5. Be active in community affairs.

6. Volunteer to speak to all local service and civic clubs.

7. Arrange appointments with other community workers to discuss topics of mutual interest and to share information: mental health clinic, doctors, etc.

8. Seek exhibit space for a guidance presentation--a bank window, a store window...Inform the general public about the services a counselor offers.

9. Counselor could accompany students that receive scholarship awards that are usually given by Elks Club, etc.

10. Invite resource people into the school to conduct workshops in human relations, drug abuse, etc., and provide vocational information.

COLLEAGUES

You have knowledge of the importance of public relations and experience in communicating with your various publics. You can share your knowledge, ideas, and experiences with other school counselors.

Send to NDPGA/NDSCA Public Relations Chairpersons
Send to NDPGA Newsletter editor
Send to:

State Board for Vocational Education
Supervisor, Vocational Guidance
900 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505

Department of Public Instruction
Counseling and Guidance Services
Bismarck, ND 58505

SPECIAL NOTE ON GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Remember that legislators are among your publics. A public relations effort may reap rewards. Activities can include an orientation session

soon after elections. Put legislators on your mailing lists for counseling association newsletters. Speak at hearings and write letters. When a session ends, write to express your opinions about legislative action on bills affecting education.

APGA--"Tips for those who would communicate with Legislators about Legislation" (January 29, 1981--Paul L. Collins, Ed.D.)

Each year more and more of us are involved in situations which might mean contacting our legislator whether at the local, state, or national level. There is a right and a wrong way of communicating with a public official, especially today when the number of dollars appropriated by the Federal Government for a project or program on which you are interested hinges on the vote in a committee somewhere many miles away from your locale. It is necessary that you learn to communicate with the legislator as forcefully and knowledgeably as you know how. It is also necessary to remember that, when you write, the letter represents you or your organization, to the person who receives it. The primary purpose behind your written communication is usually to present your point of view to the legislator in hope that your view along with the facts will be able to influence the legislator to support your position on an issue. This is known as lobbying. In order to do a good job in lobbying, there are some things which you normally do and some things which you never do. They are listed here for your information and guidance.

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS IN LOBBYING

DO'S

1. Do know your legislator's name. Spell it correctly.
2. Do inform yourself about specific bills. Know what you are talking about.
3. Do use plain stationery or personal stationery. If you are writing as a representative of a group, use organization stationery.
4. Do use first class mail.
5. Do let the legislator know how a particular measure will effect your locality-his/her district.
6. Do be concise.
7. Do be complete enough to give pertinent reasons and facts.
8. Do be sincere.
9. Do be courteous always.
10. Do clearly identify the bill using the title and number, if possible.

DON'TS

1. Don't guess at the spelling of your legislator's name.
2. Don't guess at the facts or base your letters on rumors.
3. Don't use mimeographed letters or printed postal cards; they give no evidence that you can think for yourself.
4. Don't use form letters under any circumstances.
5. Don't limit yourself to generalities.
6. Don't be wordy.
7. Don't leave out essential details.
8. Don't use insincere flattery or flowery terms.
9. Don't use threats--ever!
10. Don't get mixed up on the name, number, or the context of the bill.

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